

## Editorial

# Shared Practices and Theories in Academic Writing

The articles comprising this Spring 2014 issue of the *Journal of Academic Writing* were not composed under the umbrella of a common theme or conference topic. Readers will find a number of shared practices and theories within the articles, however, and for this reason the articles have been arranged to speak to each other.

The issue begins with a pair of articles focusing on students and writing. Contributing to the growing body of research on affective dimensions of academic writing, Maria Leedham's 'Enjoyable', 'okay', or 'like drawing teeth'? Chinese and British Students' Views on Writing Assignments in UK Universities', gives voice to students' attitudes about writing for assessment at university. Leedham's research found that many students do not feel well-prepared to undertake university-level writing, and suggests that dedicated writing development provision would be of benefit to all students. The second article, 'Academic Writing Workshops: Impact of Attendance on Performance', by Chinny Nzekwe-Excel, takes a quantitative approach to investigating student writing. Nzekwe-Excel reports on a statistical analysis of the impact of academic writing workshops to support students with writing in one university discipline. Her findings demonstrate 'a strong pattern of linear relationship between academic writing workshop attendance and students' performance in assessment' (24), and as a result she argues that the importance of academic writing workshops needs to be actively promoted.

The next pair of articles looks at academics and writing. Roison Donnelly's article, 'Supporting Lecturers in the Disciplines in the Affective Academic Writing Process', focuses on university academics' attitudes toward their own writing and learning processes in writing for publication. Donnelly argues that training in the practice of writing for publication has, among other valuable outcomes, potential to increase academics' empathy for their students as writers as well as their knowledge of how to support and develop their students' writing. Mike Smith and Mary Deane's article, 'Supporting the Neophyte Writer: the Importance of Scaffolding the Process', also deals with academics' writing for scholarly publication. This article explores reasons for high attrition rates in the publication writing of academics who are new to this type of writing, and proposes an innovative strategy of collaborative writing through PowerPoint scaffolding to motivate and support novice writers in producing publications.

The final two articles focus on the work of university writing centres. Íde O'Sullivan and Lawrence Cleary's 'Peer-tutoring in Academic Writing: the Infectious Nature of Engagement' investigates the effectiveness of a model for training peer writing tutors that encourages tutors to develop an awareness of their own writing strategies and processes in order to work at a metacognitive level with other students on their writing. Through a questionnaire study and interviews, O'Sullivan and Cleary gauge the extent to which such training in turn informs the writing support that peer tutors offer to students, and conclude that this method is effective. While O'Sullivan and Cleary detail the setting up of peer writing tutor training in the first writing centre in Irish higher education, Marna Broekhoff's article discusses her role in establishing the first academic writing center in Namibia. In 'A Tale of Two Writing Centers in Namibia: Lessons for Us All', Broekhoff recounts her experiences as an English Language Fellow sponsored by the United States government and the challenges and rewards she encountered while working to set up a writing center in what was for her a foreign country.

Broekhoff offers this account as 'a case study of the politics of collaboration involved in implementing a writing center', and argues that although the case study is 'locally derived', it carries 'global applications' and guidelines for all who are involved in negotiating and creating writing centre provision (66).

The articles featured in this issue contribute individually and as a group to informing the field of Academic Writing, and to making the *Journal of Academic Writing* a meaningful forum for developing and sharing academic writing teaching practice and research.

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